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Interview with Ronald and Sara Davis
8/26/2003
Bronx Historical Project

Dr. Mark Naison- "D"
Ronald Davis- "R"
Sara Davis- "S"

D- We are at the home of Ronald and Sara Davis, long-time Bronx activists, and this is the ninth interview of the Bronx African-American History Project. This first interview is going to focus on the development of the Morrisania Community. So my first question, and this is to Ronald, in a correspondence to me, you indicated that your family moved to the Bronx from Westchester in 1931. What led your family to take this step?

R- Super jobs, because they came to Brook Ave. and 169th, 168th streets back when it was and still is mostly Caucasian now, and they got jobs as "Supers", cause during the depression they lost their jobs up in Westchester. They got super jobs, cause when you were a super, you didn't have to pay rent.

D- So that's what motivated this?

R- Yes, they came and got super jobs, but they weren't the only ones. A lot of black families I know came from Westchester to the Bronx, like I said before about the Cape Verdian (sp) families who are kind of invisible because it was mostly men, they didn't have women, they came through New England---

D- Now what kind of jobs did the Cape Verdian men work at when they were living in Westchester?

R- My grandfather took care of rich white people's houses like Mexicans do today, taking care of the grounds.

D- So he was a landscaper and gardener?

R- Before that he was a fisherman up in New Bedford.

D- Right, because I was wondering if any of the Cape Verdians were merchant seamen.

R- He was in New Bedford, and her (Sara) father came through Connecticut.

D- Okay, so they moved to Brook Ave. and where?

R- Bout 160, I wasn't born yet, my brother was like around 3, he was born in Yonkers, about 169-170th right there on Brook Ave.

D- Where there many black families living in the neighborhood at that time?

R- There were some, but Brook Ave. at that time was mostly white, and did not get black for about another ten years.

D- In other words, by the early 40's it was a predominantly black neighborhood?

R- By the early 40's, from what they told me.

D- Right, what year were you born?

R- 1948

D- So you were a baby boomer.

R- I was born on Washington Ave.

D- So your family started out on Brook Ave and moved to Washington and where?

R- Well what happened was my father was also a number man and my grandmother was also a number woman, and my grandfather worked down at a hotel as a house man at what was then called the Dixie Hotel and is now called the Hotel Carter on 42nd st. My brother still works there, and he is 75 years old. So he worked, and they were supers, plus they were hustlers taking numbers, cause numbers were the way black people survived. So in 1948, my grandmother hit the number and she bought a four family house on Washington Ave between 168th and 169th Sts. So she stopped being a super then.

D- And that was the house you were born in?

R- That is the only house I know. I don't know the Brook Ave. Now my mother lived on Brook Ave as well, but she didn't raise me. She's from Brook Ave too. She's from North Carolina.

D- Okay, so your mother's from North Carolina---

R- And my father is from South Carolina.

D- And your father's from South Carolina---

R- And he was raised by a Cape Verdian.

D- Interesting, because it seems like there was a very large number of South Carolinians who settled in the Bronx. Did they have associations?

R- Back when I was little there were so many, I don't know what happened. Back when I was small they used to come up and stay in my house until they got situated. But it all disappeared in a few years. But I know when I was little, they came up from South Carolina to my house to live, because we had a big house. They would stay there until

they got a place, and my Grandmother would let them stay, you know. So they had their little networks, but as time went on it kind of disappeared. It's the same thing with the Cape Verdians, they had their little networks, but as time went on, they disappeared too. I remember it in the 50's when they had it.

D- But eventually the different nationalities fused-

R- Fused, we were all black anyway.

D- Now was Washington Ave a predominantly black block when you were growing up?

R- It was mostly black, but there were some whites.

D- What nationalities were most of the whites?

R- Well the house we lived in we had white tenants. We had Italian and Irish tenants. Cause an Italian lady taught me how to read. We had Irish tenants, and they were actually poorer than we were, cause both of them did not have a man in the house, well the Irish did, but he left. So it was Irish and Italian, and there was Jewish people. Those three.

D- And what elementary school did you attend?

R- St. Agustaine.

D- Was your family catholic?

R- Just my grandfather, but he made me.

D- So you went to that St. Agustaine school-

R- Yeah, I was catholic all my life, but I'm not catholic anymore. But I went to St. Agustaine because of him.

D- What was the racial composition of the school at the time when you started there?

R- It was mostly black, Puerto Rican, and some whites who were leftover from the past. Not too many. But the teachers were all basically Irish Catholics, Christian Brothers of St. John the Baptist de LaSalle, and the nuns. And they beat me a whole lot.

D- The Christian Brothers had a reputation for beating people.

R- Yeah, they beat me a whole lot. That's why I don't go there no more. They beat me a lot.

D- Was it a good education along with the beating?

R- It was good, but I had racial conflicts with them. When I was about 12 years old, I did my own research about the early church in Africa, and I went and told them about it, and they beat me and told me that it wasn't true. That stuck with me, I was 12 years old and that stuck with me.

D- Now was your family, was there political consciousness in your family? Were any people in your family associated with the Garvey movement?

R- Trade union. Local 6, Local 144.

D- Was there a left wing presence in the neighborhood at all? Was Paul Robeson-

R- Like at Tremont, there was a left wing presence with a lot of left wing Jewish people, like Marxist Jewish people, and I knew about them, but there wasn't too much left wing. There was more of an African consciousness than a left wing consciousness.

D- Now Local 6 is hotel workers-

R- Hotel workers. Local 6 and Local 144, the two of them. My brother is in one and my grandfather was in the other one. He was a houseman, and he fixed the lights and everything. My brother was a bellhop, and still is at 75 years old.

D- Now did you grow up with a race consciousness from your family or is this something that you got from the environment you lived in?

R- I tell you the truth. At first, I had no race concept. The house we owned with the white kids in it, there was no problem. But when I was 12 years old, that same year, that's when everything happened, I was 12 years old the school I went to was St. Agustaine, mostly black. But they sent this white kid to the school, he was from Lincoln Hall, Lincoln Hall was a Catholic reform school, so they put him in our school instead of the white school. And me and him became best friends. He lived on Clay Ave. Clay Ave at that time was mostly white. Where I lived on Jefferson Pl., by that time we had moved again, to Jefferson Pl. right off of Boston Rd. That was all black, just about. So this kid I tell your about, me and him were best friends, me him and a Puerto Rican guy, and the people called us the Three Musketeers, and he lived on Clay Ave, like I said before, and Clay Ave was mostly German and Irish. And he was half Irish half Polish. And one day he told me not to hang around him no more, I didn't see it coming. So I said, "Why not?" and he said the other kids were calling him a nigger lover. So you know I was devastated, I did not know what to think. I was like walking in a daze, so I was like "What about Jose?", and he said that he was different and he could hang around.

D- Nothing before prepared you for this?

R- No, no nothing, because they had owned property with white tenants and everything, white people looked up to them. Maybe that's why, because they were supers in buildings

with whites in them. My grandmother and my father took numbers, and my father had all kinds of customers, white, black and Spanish, but this here's what did it.

D- So this is when you were like 12?

R- Yeah. After it happened...it still bothers me until this day. I sat down on his stoop, thinking about it and thinking "Why he did that?" I was sitting down and some other white kids came by on the skates. So my grandmother's best friend used to be a German lady, so one white kid said he was German, another said he was Irish. So I said, "You German?" But I didn't anything by it. So he said, "That's right Nigger and if you call me a Nazi I'll kick your ass." So I went home, and ask my oldest brother about why this happened. The kid also told me that blacks never did anything and we have no history. So I said, "What did we do?" and he couldn't tell me. He said that there comes a time in everyman's life when this happens and I said "Yeah, what did we do?" and I was crying by now, and he said that this happens to all of us. So that didn't satisfy me. I went to the Morrisania Library on 169th St on McKinley Square and Franklin Avenue, and I told the librarian there what had happened. She told me to calm down, sit down, and she gave me that book by Langston Hughes, *Great American Negroes*, and that was my beginning of reading about Black history.

D- Was this an African American Woman?

R- Yes.

D- So this was on your own?

R- Yeah, she calmed me down, because I had an asthma attack and I was crying, and she told me to "calm down Ronald". And she gave me a book on it, which was my first experience on African American culture and reading, and I haven't stopped since.

D- You had mentioned that Morrisania was known as the Harlem of the Bronx. Now when you were growing up, were there a lot of stores owned by Blacks?

R- From Brook Ave, 168th St where my mother lived at and brothers and sisters from a different father lived at, from right there all the way over to Jennen (sp) street by Prospect Ave every single candy store from 166th St over, over were all Black owned. There was not a single owned white candy store. Every single one was black owned. And the grocery stores were half black owned and then white and Spanish were the other half.

D- Now were these stores owned by southerners, Caribbeanens or both?

R- Mostly southerners and some Caribbeans. Like on my block on Jefferson Place, were I grew up after Washington Ave, my next stop, on Jefferson Place and Clinton Ave, the store on the corner, the grocery store and the candy store were owned by a West Indian man named Mr. Jimmy who went to Africa a lot. He was a Garveyite. He wasn't part of the organization, but he talked about it a lot.

D- But did he have pictures on the wall?

R- No, he used to go to Africa, and show us films when he came back. He and his wife owned the store. But the other candy store down the block was owned by a man named Mr. Davis, he was a Southern black. The next grocery store on Boston Road was owned by a Black man and his Japanese wife who met in WWII. The next one was owned by blacks too, but I'm not sure they were from. Sometimes they seemed Caribbean, sometimes they seemed southern, maybe they were from the Bahamas. I don't know. Then down the block, there was another store that was southern owned, I mean they all were.

D- Now were there restaurants also?

R- Yeah.

D- Where were some of the eating places?

R- The best one was the Pit. It was on the corner of 169th st and Boston Road. All the Panthers used to go there and eat. Robert Bay, Huey Newton's bodyguard, me and him used to go there all the time together.

D- So this was still open in the late sixties?

R- Yeah, and there were some other ones, but I don't remember their names, just like Mom and Pop type places. There were a lot of them with no names, just like Mom's place, Pop's place there were a lot of them. Mostly on Boston Road and Prospect ave the Fish and chip places. On Prospect Avenue there used to be a Chinese restaurant, I don't know who owned it, but it was a Chinese restaurant and everyone who worked there was black. A friend of mine, I used to hang out with him on 165th st and Washington Ave, him and his brother, and his mother sent us all the way to Prospect Ave. to buy Chinese food cause it was black owned. So we went all the way over to Prospect to buy Chinese. There was nothing but blacks in there.

D- When you were growing up did your family have television in the fifties?

R- Oh yeah.

D- So were you aware of Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement?

R- Of course. I was in the Harlem Riot. My father tried to stop me but couldn't.

D- The 1964 Riot?

R- Yeah, my father tried to stop me but he couldn't stop me. I told him I was going down there.

D- You had mentioned in your letter the incredible music that was taking place. Were you very aware of this as a child?

R- Yeah of course. I could hear it on every corner. On every corner guys were singing. It started out just black guys singing, later on Spanish guys started copying the black guys, then Italians started getting into it. That why this book I read on the Gangs of New York is wrong, cause it says that it was started by Blacks and Italians and didn't. It was just blacks for a long time, then it was Puerto Ricans following Blacks, then a lot of the groups got integrated. Then later on it was Italian guys like Deion (sp) and I swear Deion used to come up to my neighborhood sometimes. He was a Fordham (*undeterminable*) but he used to sneak out on his own to the black neighborhoods. Deion of the Belmonts.

D- When you were growing up were there a lot of gangs?

R- Yeah, the Sportsmen. My brother wore Council of the Crowns. You know the Crowns, from around Prospect. What you call Morrisania, way I see it when I grew up, east of Prospect Ave was Morrisania west is Hunts' Point. I mean other way around.

D- So Kelly St. that's Hunts' Point?

R- Right, that's Hunts Point. Now when I grew up, this is something I notice and its not hard and fast, but a lot of Caribbean blacks lived on the other side more so than our side, our side was southern blacks. Now that wasn't a hard and fast rule, there was an overlap, somehow Prospect Ave was a dividing line.

D- When did Sara's Family move to the Bronx?

R- Her brothers were raised there from the 40's.

S- I grew up in New Rochelle.

D- And did you guys meet in the Bronx?

R- Fordham Road.

D- What year was that?

S- In the 70's. 73 maybe.

D- And you were then living in New Rochelle?

S- No, it was different, I was living in the Bronx. I moved to the Bronx in like 68 or 69.

R- Her brothers and cousins were raised in the Bronx from the 40's. They kept her in New Rochelle.

D- They kept you in New Rochelle?

S- I'm not getting into it (*laughter*).

D- Was there a significant Puerto Rican presence in your neighborhood?

R- Yeah, always. But it was more black than Puerto Ricans. That's how most of the gangs I knew when I grew up - First it was the Sportsmen and the Crowns, mostly. The Sportsmen were from my neighborhood. They were from Washington Ave up to Jennen St. The Crowns were on the other side where her brother and them, he was with the Crowns, they was up on Kelly St. and Longwood Ave. That was in the 50's. In the 60's somehow through magic, the Crowns who used to be Black became Spanish. The black people moved out of that neighborhood, the gang stayed and the Puerto Ricans inherited that gang. But the original Crowns were black guys.

D- Like the Bloods in New York now have a lot of Puerto Ricans in them.

R- Yeah but this happened through cultural transmission and out migration or something like that. But there were a lot of gangs, the Sportsmen, the Disciples, the Crowns, the Horsemen, (the Horsemen were Puerto Rican guys) 174st by Crotona Park. There were the Fordham Bolies (sp) in the 50's when I was little. This Puerto Rican girl who lived beneath me, they carved "FB" in her breasts with a knife for Fordham Bolies. The Italian guys. There were always gangs.

D- Did the gangs make the streets dangerous? Did you feel growing up that you had to watch were you were going?

R- No, no. In fact it was more safe then it is now. For example, when I go down to the Bronx now, there is no Third Ave. El so I'm discombobulated. It seems to me back then, there was gang fights, and if I crossed the park in a Puerto Rican neighborhood they might beat me up, but even with all that it felt like there was some comradarie. Even with the hurts, it was different. You felt like you were part of something that was bigger than you. That feeling is gone. That is with the crime, even drugs, none of my friends growing up shot drugs. They did not shoot drugs until the sixties. When I grew up in the 50's the only people who shot drugs where guys like my oldest brother he was a jazz musician, the one I was telling you about. They had a guy in his band who shot drugs. Like trying to be Charlie Parker. They were like men, they were in their twenties then, they were in their twenties not teenagers, those guys shot drugs, and they were well-dressed jazz musicians. It wasn't like the late 60's when the young kids got into Heron, that's why I believe that was a government plot. Like what your friend said. I believe that because that is what destroyed the neighborhood. I know when I grew up the Puerto Rican guys were shooting drugs at an early age, but not the blacks. We just drank wine and jitterbugs.

D- In Patterson they said there was nobody shooting until the sixties, and it just destroyed the community.

R- I know when I grew up, the Puerto Rican guys from like Clairemount Parkway, they would gang fight and shoot drugs at the same time. I don't know how they did that. I would say "Gypsy, how do you do that?" We didn't do that. The blacks, none of us shot drugs. The only guy I know who shot drugs, the one guy, his name was ... I ain't going to say his name. He was from the Longwood Ave area and moved to my neighborhood with his brother because he was a management problem to his family. And he was half-black, half-Hawaiian, and he was a war baby. His mother was Hawaiian, and his father went to the war and died. Both of his parents were dead, and he lived with his brother because they could not manage him. He is the only one out of all the teenage guys I know who shot drugs. The only one. But then it seemed like in the sixties everybody started it. You know, like the later part of the sixties. But blacks didn't Puerto Ricans did. Except for that one person. In my neighborhood.

D- Were the black kids in your neighborhood into Latin music?

R- Of course, yeah. We used to go to dances at the what do you call it... I forget the name of that place, on Southern Blvd, I can't think of the name right now, but on Southern Blvd. Yeah. It was like a cross-fertilization, oh yeah.

D- Because that was definitely mentioned by the people in Patterson.

R- Cause we used to dress like Hustler. With belly bottom pants and cane shoes so when you dance Latin like dance the Hustle your pants would flow like back and forth. It made your pants look good. When you danced Latin it made you look good cause of the way the pants flowed.

D- Now you mentioned the club "Silvia's Blue Morroco". Was that the same Silvia who made "Rapper's Delight?"

R- She made a record called "Love is Strange" in the 50's.

D- I remember, Mickey and Silvia.

R- Same lady, I couldn't go cause I was too young. I snuck in the window. It was right on Boston Road. Her club wasn't the only club on Boston Rd but because of her personality, her club is the one that stood out. I think hers was the most popular but they had on Prospect club 845, the Boston Road Ballroom, they had a couple of them. Hers was the most swank. It was like painted blue all over, and it was very tasteful. You had to dress a certain way to get in there. Guys who went in there I saw used to wear suits. I was a kid, I couldn't go in, but I could look. It was right on Boston Rd. Like I said, Boston Road was full of spots like that. Boston Rd was like a black paradise.

D- That's what it sounds like. I don't know if you know somebody by the name of Jim Pruitt, who grew up in Morrisania he was a high school teacher for many years and just retired. He still goes to a barber shop in the neighborhood, so we may end up going

down, he is going to be helping me interview, we may interview the people in the barber shop.

R- Well speaking of that. In Morrisania they have a Father's Day every year they have a reunion at Crotona Park.

D- I was going to go this year but I was so exhausted—

R- I'm going to tell you, I lived on Washington Ave first, and that was alright. That was like mixed and it was okay. But then when I moved to Jefferson Place, which is right off of Boston Rd, the house I lived in was not as nice as the one we lived in then because my grandfather got cheated out of his property. The house was not as nice, we lived in a beat up house, but the neighborhood was better because of the culture. It was the same neighborhood, but it was more concentrated because there was more black there. They tore our house down and built that Claymont Village Project.

D- So your house is where it is now Clairmont Village?

R- And that school right there in the corner, that's my house. That school that's in the projects. That neighborhood had a lot of things going for itself too.

D- That's interesting because tomorrow night I'm interviewing one of my former students who grew up in the Clairmount Village projects when crack hit.

R- Well Clairmont Village, like this lady named Ms. Buchanan, Suzie Buchanan, I think that she might be dead now, she buried my father for free because he used to take numbers, but he did embalming for her. And she used to have the Mafia guys gamble in her funeral parlor back in the 50's on Washington Ave. Her funeral parlor used to be on Washington Ave, it was like a castle. Then they moved to Tenton Ave, and the same thing happened to her happened to us. They tore the whole neighborhood down so the whole neighborhood that used to be on Washington Ave had to move east. Cause the Lincoln Drug store was on—Have you ever heard of the Lincoln Drug Store?

D- No.

R- The Lincoln Drug Store was owned by a Jewish man who was married to an Italian lady, my father used to take numbers for his brother-in-law. He was a Mafioso guy who had kids with black women. By the way, another thing. There were plenty of interracial kids back then, but they all lived in a black neighborhood. Because a lot of my friends, their fathers were mafia guys, or Jewish guys, but there was plenty of them. But they all lived in the black neighborhood. The Lincoln Drug Store, he only hired black people. Antonio Fargas the actor used to work there. You know him, Huggy Bear? Huggy Bear used to work at the Drug Store. First they were on Washington Ave and 169th St, when they tore it down, they tore down my house, the Lincoln Drug Store, Ms. Cannon's beauty parlor, they tore down Sal, Italian guy Sal's grocery store, all those businesses, except for Sal's were all black businesses, black church, most of them moved into the

heart of Morrisania from the periphery. You know, cause they tore stuff down to build those projects. So that's what happened. So we followed the Drug Store, cause we moved with it. Whereas my mother, she moved to Brooklyn. I didn't live with her, but she moved to Brooklyn. I stayed in the Bronx with my father and my grandfather.

D- And what block did you end up going to from there?

R- From Washington Ave to Jefferson Place.

D- So Washington was cleared for Clairemont. And then you moved to Jefferson.

R- Yeah, but do you see what happened though? They cleared--- Let me tell what they did. The house we owned was a four family house, beautiful you know, it was integrated with Italians and Irish, other houses were owned by black people, the apartment building on the corner was integrated black and white, they tore down houses. It wasn't like a slum. So they tore down all those houses to build the projects.

D- And the project turned into a disaster.

R- And the houses they tore down were beautiful. The house we had was the best house that I have ever lived in. It was four-stories, it had stained glass windows, it four-stories high, and they tore it down for those projects. And we moved to Jefferson place, and at Jefferson place that is where I came into my own. But the Lincoln Drug Store, lets get back to the Lincoln Drug Store for a second, he hired all blacks. Even though he was a white-owned drug store, he was accepted like a black man. He hired all black kids. You go to drug stores nowadays, they hire Spanish, Indians, but very seldom do they hire blacks. That gets to me. He hired all black kids, so a lot of the kids that he hired became pharmacists one used to work at Harlem Hospital, they became pharmacists they were black kids from the neighborhood, they became pharmacists, one of them became an actor that's Huggy Bear. All of them became something, none of them became bums. You know, they gave black kids a chance.

D- This whole story is turning into a rather extraordinary---

R- Exactly, you go into any drug store in the city now and you don't see no black kids working there, except the ones they have to like Rite Aid cause Rite Aid belongs to my unit 1199 so Rite Aid is going to have to hire them or the big drug stores the big chains. The small pharmacists since the late sixties early seventies blacks were frozen out of them unless they owned them. But that ain't the way it used to be. A lot of those kids became pharmacists because of the training they learned under this man, I think his name was Barney, he used to own Lincoln Drug Store. And even though his family was involved in the numbers a little bit and still he helped a lot of people. And my family got their medicine for free cause my father used to work for them, so if we got sick it was free.

D- Where did you end up going to High School? Public or Catholic?

R- Well I had a hard thing with that. I went to two public high schools and they both kicked me out for fighting. I went to Clinton, then I went to Evander. They both kicked me out for fighting. By then I was a jitterbug, you know.

D- So by the time you left high school you were into the whole gang scene?

R- Yeah, I was into that, and everything. And then I went away for a few years, and that's where I got my diploma then after that I got out and got my master's and everything. I did about four years and three months upstate.

D- So this was when you were still a teenager?

R- Yeah.

D- When you were into this jitterbug street phase, were you also becoming more politically conscious at the same time?

R- The same time.

D- That's always interesting because how did you balance those two?

R- I told my father I was going to the Harlem Riots, and he said no you can't go down there and I said I'm going. My cousin lived in Harlem on 8th Ave and she went to summer school with James Powell, the kid who got killed. And James Powell was a Bronx kid, you know that right?

D- No I didn't know that.

R- The one who they killed. A lot of times Harlem, things happen in Harlem or Manhattan but they are from the Bronx. People sing at the Apollo, but they are from the Bronx. James Powell is how the Harlem Riots started.

D- He was the kid outside of Wagner Jr. High School—

R- Wagner Jr. High School, my cousin went there for summer school, he was from Soundview Projects. But the riots were in Harlem. Cause me and a lot of guys from Soundview, and guys from Bronxdale, and guys from my neighborhood went to the Harlem Riot in revenge of him. So we were jitterbuggin, but we were politically conscious at the same time.

D- Were you very aware of the Bronx CORE chapter? There was a militant CORE chapter on Boston Rd.

R- Yeah, very militant. In fact, they helped my development in a way. In a stupid story but its true. Once I was on Fordham Rd. at the White Castle. And they were boycotting

the White Castle, and they knew me cause one of them lived across the street from me on Clinton Ave. One of the leaders but I don't know his name though.

D- Could it have been Herb Calendar?

R- Short light-skinned guy. I don't remember his name though.

D- No, Calendar was a dark-skinned guy.

R- This was a short light-skinned guy.

D- Could it have been Isaiah Brunson?

R- I don't remember his name, but he knew me and he knew my father. And saw me buying White Castle Hamburgers when they were out there demonstrating. So he told me, "Don't buy what your people can't work." And it never dawned on me before, because White Castle was my favorite restaurant. Women used to come to your car and my father would drive up there and they'd bring you the hamburgers. I was stunned when he said that. The was one of the beginnings of my development that with CORE. They were on Boston Rd. Some of the nationalists, cause there were cultural nationalists in the Bronx too, if you locate Hakeem and the Drummers, cause there was this guy Keebo (sp) Hikee, they were all nationalists not Muslim, but nationalists. They used to play Kumba drums in the park against the Puerto Ricans.

D- This is like the early sixties?

R- This is like 63, 64, 65. So my jitterbuggin was right in tune with the African.

D- Which park were they playing in?

R- Crotona Park. They used to have drum battles against the Puerto Ricans and the black Cubans. Sometimes they'd win, sometimes the Puerto Ricans would win. Hakeem is a well-known drummer now. You ask somebody about him now, I don't know were he is, he disappeared, because what happened is I think that he disillusioned with the Bronx too, cause of how things had changed, and moved to Brooklyn because Brooklyn had more of a nationalist community. But he's from 166th St by St. Anthony's Church and Prospect Ave. That's were he's from. Cause he's an ex-Sportsman who became nationalist. Keebo is an ex-Sportsmen too, he used to be ace. All those nationalists guys used to be Sportsmen, back from the 50's Sportsmen not the 60's Sportsmen. They were the guys I knew as a little kid growing up. And they all, all those ex-Sportsmen like that turned nationalists. Some of them did a little time upstate and turned upstate, some turned nationalists on their own out here.

D- Now when you were sent up, were you sent up for youthful offense or were you an adult?

R- I was a kid, but they gave me adult.

D- Was there a lot of political activism upstate where you went?

R- Yeah. Mostly it was based off of the five percenters. We were all five percenters.

D- When was the five percent nation founded?

R- 1963, Clarence 13 X.

D- Did they have much of a presence in the Bronx, or was it just inside?

R- Well, it was just starting in the Bronx about 65, but it was big in the Bronx County Jail.

D- Was there a Nation of Islam Temple in Morrisania at any point?

R- Yeah, it was on Morris Ave.

D- Between where and where?

R- Morris Ave, towards the courthouse.

D- So its more west?

R- Right. My friend Chris' mother was a nurse at St. Barnabas and she was one of the first ones to join it. They had a chapter in the Bronx, but it wasn't as big as Harlem. They also had a Moors' Science Temple in the Bronx.

D- Now the Moors' Science, where was that located?

R- I don't know where they where they were located, but I used to see them walk around Boston Road. I never knew where they were centered, but they used to walk around with the little fez's on. I never knew where their headquarters was, but I used to see them walk around Boston Rd when I was like 9, 10, 11.

D- So you got your High School Diploma inside, then you came out, where did you get your college diploma?

R- I got my bachelors at Adelphi and my masters at Columbia.

D- And did you move back to the Bronx?

R- Until recently, yeah. The neighborhood I'm from, Jefferson Place, I lived there at their house until like 72' cause I had to get out of that neighborhood. It was too much. But for

a while, like the summer of 70' even until 71 I, we had a chapter of the Panthers there, and I was a community worker for them.

D- So you became associated with the Black Panther group when you came back?

R- Yeah on Boston Rd.

D- Did they have a storefront?

R- Yeah, they had the biggest one. This was the ministry of information. The ministry of information was on Boston Rd, for the entire East Coast. A lot of people came through there whose names I don't want to say. But a lot of people came through there. I remember Bobby Seale's wife, I remember Huey Newton's bodyguard and I used to eat at the soul food restaurant on Boston Rd. His name was Robert Bay. The movie "Panther" was dedicated to him. Afeni Shakur was there, they all came out the Bronx, the Disciples.

D- So they came out of the Disciples?

R- Afeni and Daruba. It was a club in Morrisania.

D- There was also Michael Tabor.

R- Yeah, I know him too.

D- Cause I remember there was this paper we had up on the Fordham Rd area where he wrote that capitalism plus junk equals slavery.

R- The Panther Party was strong on Boston Rd back then. One of the criticisms I had with it now, as I look back in retrospect, is the same criticisms that I have with rap music. Its glorified the upper proletariat, and a I think that its wrong. I think in the old days it glorified the bourgeoisie and now they glorify the rich. Men like my grandfather, the working class, should be glorified.

D- I couldn't agree with you more. But I actually wrote something about that.

R- That's the ones who should be glorified, the working class.

D- That was Cleaver's influence.

R- Right, but I believed in it. He's my hero, but now I look back upon that and I think in retrospect I'm older I work in Riker's Island everyday and I work with inmates everyday, and I see the effects of the lumpy ideology, but they don't call it that. They call it thug culture. But I see the ideology of the lumpert proletariat and rap music expresses that too. To a great degree, that is what is destroying a whole generation of black people.

D- We should talk more about that off camera, cause you are one of the few who have said that and I have some friends who have been saying that for a long time.

R- I said it because I was on the other side. I am not for the establishment, I still believe in socialism, but I don't believe in the lumpin. The lumpin lifestyle has to go.

D- But that's something... That's a big, big subject.

R- As a whole, we need to get back to a working class rooted culture that we lost. You know, when you worship the bourgeois, the petty bourgeois, that's not the way to go. You worship the lumpert, that's not the way to go. It's the men like my grandfather who didn't have nothing and did something, those are the men we need to emulate. The working class. That don't mean that everything against the law is bad, cause back in the day the old people who took numbers weren't lumpert, they took numbers cause they couldn't get jobs anywhere else.

D- That's interesting cause all of Paterson people told me. The numbers people were part of the community, they were gentlemen, they did not carry guns.

R- Let me tell you something. My father was a mobile number man. That why I know different neighborhoods in the Bronx. My father did not stay just in Morrisania, he used to drive around. He had customers all around. Kelly and them used to own a trucking business, and he used to have black customers in other neighborhoods. He had customers in Forrest Hills. What I'm trying to say is, they were like traveling salesmen. When they saw him, they were like glad to see him.

D- There was some who say that the state lottery really hurt the black community because it took away a tremendous source of upward mobility and an accumulation of wealth.

R- It did. Men like my father, they did other jobs. But the numbers were the mainstay. He would get jobs cleaning carpets or working in the funeral homes but those were all cyclical and they lay you off. The numbers was one that would stick.

D- Now when you were growing up, what were most of the jobs that the fathers did?

R- Most of them were laborers. Worked in plants, factories, hotels, my family is basically hotel workers. My grandfather and my brother, he's 20 years older than me, they worked in hotels.

D- Did any people crack into construction, or was that closed off?

R- Not too much cause construction was very racist. Not that they couldn't do it, because a lot of the people from South Carolina were skilled mason's, but they could not get into the construction union. Especially from South Carolina or Virginia.

D- Do you remember any demonstrations of construction sites, or was that mostly happening in Brooklyn and the World's Fair?

R- No most demonstrations held in the Bronx were around the Hospital and Lincoln, and about hospital care, and hiring blacks to work there. I remember when I was working at Lincoln they only wanted to hire Puerto Ricans and not blacks, and we had to fight against that. They only wanted to hire Spanish people. I tell it like it is, so it was mostly about jobs and health care. So by the time I was conscious about that, it was mostly about jobs and health care. Construction unions were basically Italian guys and Irish guys, and they wouldn't let blacks get near it. Some of my friends fathers worked on the docks back then. They worked as longshoremen, not many, but some.

D- Were any merchant seamen?

R- My grandfather, the Cape Verdians, they were merchant seamen. Two of the Cape Veridan men I knew.

D- Now you mentioned this whole thing about drugs in the community. It seemed like a lot of people did not mention tension with the Police until the 60's. Was there a lot of tension growing up? Or is it something that came later?

R- To me, I never trusted them. Because I know sometimes when they couldn't catch men with numbers, they put it on them. I'd seen them do it to my father and other men. So before the drugs, I did not trust them. Personally I never trusted them. It has nothing to do with law and order. I believe in law, I just don't believe in them. Most of them I knew were racist, I met a few a good ones now. When I had asthma attacks, they would grab me and take me to the hospitals, big old Irish guys, so there were incidents. But as a whole I saw what happened to other people. Even though they helped me personally, I saw them hurt other people.

D- What was the impact of the Vietnam war?

R- We always talked about that. Before we even went we knew about it. Cause when I was a kid, I don't know how the kids are now, but when I grew up in the Bronx, we were conscious about all that stuff. We would sit around the stoop and talk about it. As kids. We all understood it, talked about it, analyzed it.

D- Do you know people who got drafted?

R- We all read the newspaper, the Mirror, the Post, the Amsterdam, everybody I knew read the newspaper.

D- What upsets me and other people is that there are kids today who denigrate academic achievement, and call that acting white. And that seems to be something that did exist in this community at all.

R- Let me tell you something. Even upstate in the juvenile corrections facilities, Comstock and Cacsacky (sp), places like that, we used to have contest on who would get the highest mark in the GED tests. We got Regents tests, we took Regents courses. We were five percenters. We used to say... I got 270, right, 270 is mathematics, so mathematics is the wisdom of God, so we'd do it like that and make a game out of it. The whole thing was to get a higher mark than the white guys got, and most of us did better than the white guys on those tests. People up there were surprised. We used to have study groups and say, "Brother, I'm going to get a higher mark than you."

D- Marcus Garvey used to talk about that and say that the reason why they got rid of the civil service test in the West Indies is because the black guys were getting higher marks than the white guys and mixed race guys. So, there are people who blame nationalism for the dumbing down of the black community, but it sounds like the opposite.

R- Its opposite. Of all the guys from upstate, the majority of them, well Ali ain't doing too well, but the rest of them are doing okay now. In other words, they didn't go back. All of them got jobs, got degrees.

D- Now, when you were jitterbugging, would kids make fun of a kid who did well in school?

R- No, lets say they would make fun of kids who dressed funny, but not cause he was smart. They would make fun if he dressed funny, they would call him Ivy League. It was the other way around, and this is where people don't want to admit the truth about it. Sometimes they had more power than the jitterbugs. For example, I remember a lot of the Ivy League guys looked down on us and didn't talk to us. And some of them could beat us fighting. I know a lot of Ivy League guys that could beat us, so we didn't mess with them. All those Ivy League school guys were punks. I know a whole bunch of them that I was scared of.

D- A lot that ended up going to Columbia were pretty tough guys.

R- Its not like now. Everybody on my block, everyone on Jefferson Place, every single one finished high school.

D- Everybody read newspapers, talked politics, you wanted to know what was going on in the world.

R- My brother worked in the Hotels, and he used to bring home the Post. Not that junk now, but the old Post. Which was the liberal paper. My grandfather would bring home the *General American* cause he was catholic. We used to get the *Amsterdam News* every week, and that was the black paper. The *Daily News*, well we would get that sometimes, but even back then I thought it was too racists. But we all read the newspaper. The *Times* I got into later on my own. But, we read the *Mirror*, the *General American*, and the old Post, not this junk now that they call the Post.

S- What about the *Herald Tribune*?

R- I don't remember reading that.

D- The *Herald Tribune*, that was a quality paper. It was like the *New York Times*.

S- It was like the *Times*.

R- I didn't read that, did you read it?

S- Yeah, I read that.

D- Now this Vietnam War thing, because you mentioned two things: one you had friends who went over there and got killed.

R- Never came back, some never came back. A lot of the ones who came back were messed up. I'll tell ya, a lot of the guys who did time upstate at Cacsacky (sp) did better than the guys who came back from Vietnam.

D- That's amazing. I'm not surprised.

R- You know who was in Cacsacky? Phillipe Luciano. Do you know Phillipe Luciano from television? He was there when I was there, so guys like him. But a lot of guys went to Vietnam and got hooked on drugs. Not everybody, but on the whole, the Vietnam guys came out worse than we did. The guys who got deep into criminal culture are different. Guys like us, who were first timers, did it once and never again, finished college or got married, and some of them went by the wayside. But the percentage is much higher than the kids now. And even the ones who went by the wayside, the might be a dope fiend, but at least he's a literate dope fiend. He read everything. He don't put it to practice, but he got it. He scored higher than I did on the Regents.

D- Have you seen the movie "Dead Presidents"?

R- Yeah. That's more like the Vietnam that I know, cause that caught it. That caught it exactly.

D- That's the only good movie about the Bronx.

R- But "A Bronx Tale" it was excellent. I knew them white guys too. I knew them very well, so "A Bronx Tale" was excellent. I fought against them, so I had to know who I was fighting against.

D- So it was like the Fordham Baldies and the Golden Guineas.

R- All those guys. There was no difference between them and the black guys except for race. They think they different, but its no different, just poor people.

D- What is interesting to me and you came back to Jefferson Place—

R- The house I was living at is torn down now.

D- Its completely torn down?

S- It's a lot.

R- It was a private house, but it was an old house.

S- The house next door is still there

R- Yeah, 643.

S- They never built on it.

R- The two houses next to it are still there.

D- This is Jefferson Place between where and where?

R- Between Clinton and Franklin, a block form Boston Rd.

D- Okay I'll have to drive by there. At a certain point you felt like this thing was falling apart?

R- I'll tell you what really happened. I was working at Lincoln Hospital as a mental health worker, that was my first job. I used to work nights. I came home one night and everything I had was gone. That's when I knew it was time for me to go. My apartment was stripped bare, and that's when I knew it was time to go. All of the people who I knew from the neighborhood they turned to junkies. Not everyone, but a lot of them.

D- And a junkie would steal from his friend.

R- And some of them were mad, I'm not going to be egocentric, but some of them were mad that I was upstate now I got a job and going to college and they was out there and they were doing bad. An element of that was in it too.

D- And where did you move from Jefferson Place?

R- I moved to Walton Ave.

D- Which is where?

R- A block from the Concourse, 175th St. and Clifford place. That's the day I moved to Shakespeare Ave.

D- Where did you live when you met Sarah?

R- Walton Ave.

D- Were any of your relatives in Jefferson Place?

R- My grandfather and my oldest brother. They were still there. My grandmother and my father had just died. First there were four left, then there was two.

D- What did it feel like to see the Bronx burning?

R- When I first got out, my father drove me around and he said look at this. So I knew like around 69' he drove me around.

D- So there were fires started in like 69'?

R- Yep, my father drove me around and said this place is burning up. Then I moved to Walton Ave which they used to call it Morris Heights. It was a creeping then, it crept from east to west.

D- Yep, cause I remember watching the fires from the Third Ave El, then when they knocked that down, watching it from the Jerome Ave El.

R- And she lived on Shakespeare Ave. So when I moved to Shakespeare Ave and 169th St, way on the west side, there were fires everyday. So I moved up to 235th St that was in 74' and I stayed in the North Bronx until I got here. It started east and spread west. It got to the point when the west Bronx was worst than were I came from. Otherwords, I moved there thinking that it was better, cause on Jefferson Place there were no fires around there just dope fiends, but I moved to the west Bronx where it was supposed to be better and there was fires all the time.

D- Morris Heights was devastated.

R- That was a good neighborhood growing up.

S- When I first moved there it was nice.

R- When I grew up it was a good neighborhood.

S- I didn't know much about the Bronx, but when I first to Shakespeare Ave to better myself it was a beautiful area. Its the people from the private homes that ruined my building. They came and messed up. We had an intercom system, and the kids from the private homes used to come and mess with the thing.

D- And this was in the 70's?

R- The landlord was an Irish guy and an alcoholic.

S- But the building was clean.

D- According to what others have said, something happened in the 70's in terms of neighborhoods, family, culture, something happened—

R- It just went down. It really went kaputz (sp). It was building for a while, it didn't happen over night. Its like incremental.

S- You don't see it coming. I didn't see it coming until Ron made a comment about it. I was still in my dream world—

R- Tell me what I said

S- You said that the neighborhood is really going down. You don't really notice it that much, at least I didn't.

R- Yeah Shakespeare, then uptown.

S- We went to the North Bronx.

R- So I lived in the North, the West, the South, the East, I've lived all over the place. I was born in Morrisania Hospital.

S- But I swear to get back to Westchester County

D- Oh this is a beautiful neighborhood.

R- I tried to stick it out. Even the North Bronx, the same thing was happening there. Not the fires, but it was like you could see it going. The people are not the same like they used to be. For example, when I was growing up, West Indian people were different. They really cared, took care of the neighborhood. But this is a new group. These are those Trenchtowns ones.

S- Some of our West Indian friends, some of them are professionals, they even say the same thing about their own. They say these ones are different.

R- These ain't the same ones. These ain't the same ones I knew when I was younger. These are different, just like the African American kids is different, these West Indians are different. Everybody is different.

D- These are different migrants.

R- It ain't the same feeling like before. And the drug culture is heavy with them as far as selling refer and cocaine. So that's part of it too, and that's heavy. Its heavy in all cultures,

but I was surprised to see it in the West Indian culture cause the West Indians I grew up with were not like that. They had lower crime rates than black Americans, but not now. Everyone has the same crime rate, white, black. The whites, I work in Riker's Island. There's a lot of white guys in Riker's that you don't hear about. They in it too.

D- I know about that because I was involved in Brooklyn and I ran a lot of youth sports leagues.

R- It's the lumping culture, its just that blacks are the weakest link in the American Capitalist system so we are focused on. Anything that happens to blacks happens to everyone.

D- This is very interesting because remember when the Moynihan Report talked about the crisis in the black family, because 25% of black families were female headed, but 25% of American families are female headed.

R- It's a collapse in the culture no matter how you look at it.

D- Everything your saying that right. Look at Eminem, he came out of that world: trailer park, mother.

R- Like I said to you in that letter that I wrote you: I have nothing against rapping or the music itself, it's the words they use in the music. We went from Earth Angels in the Do Wop era to bitches and hoes. I got a granddaughter and daughter that live upstairs. I don't want nobody calling them bitches and hoes. Who wants that? What kind of culture is that?

D- Well your in the middle of it, and its all pervasive in the genre.

R- What I know, before my daughter was married she had better not bring home some guy that would be talking all that bitch and hoe talk. Not in my house. I didn't have to do that, cause she is not that stupid to begin with, cause she has high self-esteem and a lot of these girls don't.

D- Part of the reason to tell this story is to say that things don't have to be the way they are now.

R- And the Bronx is a microcosm of a much bigger societal picture, its across our whole society. What I think happened is, what happened with how Latins have pushed blacks out, happened in the Bronx first. The collapse of the neighborhood with the fires happened in the Bronx first. So everything that has happened in the country negative, we have had it first. So the blacks of the Bronx have experienced all of this stuff first. So to work out these issues, the blacks in the Bronx can show them

D- We have all of these brilliant, powerful people scattered all around the country, and all over the world.

R- Like my older brother, he lives in Atlanta, GA. But his license plate says Bronx. He moved to Atlanta thirty years ago, he grew up on Brook Ave. But he still feels it, but he can't live here anymore.

D- I'm working with a guy named Alan Jones who grew up in the Paterson Houses, went upstate and got a basketball scholarship, ended up playing basketball in Europe and is now living in Luxemburg where he is a banker, a radio personality, and coaches the national basketball team. He's been there 26 years.

R- People had to leave the Bronx to find themselves. If the Bronx would have stayed intact, we would have did those things right here. Across the country because of integration, the black world has disintegrated. Now the black middle class has more options, that's part of what happened. We are seeing social trends beyond the Bronx, the Bronx's focus is down. People now have more options, so they get out. I believe that the crime thing was deliberate. Any ruling class has to have people who are doing better than others that are loyal to them. So they divide the class up. Now with the middle class, some will go with the status quo, some won't. But when you've got some who do, you've accomplished your goal. Like in the old days the plan for the poor was to, like with Booker T. Washington, be a domestic work force, now that's no more needed. Athletes and entertainers. That's not even needed. That's why drugs are here, and the jails are here. We have an expendable labor force, and rather than analyzing that people are glorifying it. To me, it's a set up. It's a set up by the Capitalists.

D- It makes sense to me.

R- But I feel that people set themselves up too by going along with it, cause you do have free will. You have choice. You do have choice, you don't have to do everything that everyone else does. Maybe it might be going against the grain, but sometimes you have to go against it.

D- I've run out of questions. Sarah, do you want to say anything?

S- No, I just want to piggy back on when you asked Ron a question about the kids differences between, remember when you asked Ron about the grades?

D- When kids were getting made fun of for doing well?

S- Exactly. When I was raised in New Rochelle, we were raised for excellence. If you were stupid or dumb, you were made fun of. Not when you were exceptionally smart. The teachers made you strive for excellence. At home also, you know? My parents used to make me look at a dictionary every night to do my homework, and if I had a question I had to do it myself or my great aunt used to tell me, "Look it up" to find the answer. That sort of thing.

D- When you guys said that you wanted to do better than the white guys, that's so much like growing up Jewish. They are always going to be against you so you got to be smarter

than them. It was drilled into us, that they never are going to accept you, so you got to be better than them. And especially better than them intellectually. And that mentality would be a great thing to bring back.

S- I found that teachers in the old days made you feel good about yourself. Mine was like a mixed environment, and our teachers were something else. They told us that the world isn't easy, and when you grow up you need this and that, and they made us pay attention to current events and things that were going on in the world and we had conversations about them.

R- I was chairman of the Bronx chapter of the Black United Front, and she was Chair of the Eleanor Bumpus Committee, and that was like later on.

D- And that was like the 80's?

S- Late 70's early 80's.

R- The front was the 70's the Bumpus was the 80's. We used to meet at Beck Church on 180th St and Vice Ave. She's the head of the Brooklyn thing, but we had a Bronx Chapter. We actually had the second biggest chapter in the Black United Front.

D- It was people from all over the boro?

R- Yeah, all over.

D- Do you by any chance have the papers from that organization?

S- I have some.

R- Do you know Arthur Kryer, the Doo Wop guy? His wife was our secretary for a while.

S- We have some old papers in the basement we never did get that stuff straightened out.

D- Don't throw anything out. Because one of the things we can do is get a grant for an archive, a Bronx African American archive, were we not only have all of these interviews, but the papers of these organizations. The Black United Front papers should be in a library so that somebody could go back and see what went on the papers of the Black Panthers.

S- I have a lot of the flyers, cause I made the flyers and booklets. I think I have that somewhere.

D- Would you be willing to place that in a library?

S- Yeah, sure, why not?

R- For the Panthers, cause when I was with the Panthers I was a community worker, not an officer, me and my friends were community workers. The one who might have access

to something if anything is left is Brad Brewer. Do you know him? If you look him up on the internet, look up Brad Brewer Puppets, he was captain of the Bronx chapter sometime.

D- And he's a puppeteer now?

R- Yeah, a puppeteer, but he was captain of the Bronx Chapter when I was there.

D- What of the things that I want to do, if I can knock these Bronx Historical Society people over their head, they have a whole empty building which I want to turn into a Bronx African American History Archive. Those papers are key, because students should be able to write papers about those organizations.

R- Yeah, cause whenever I research the United Front, all I see is Rev. Daltry of Brooklyn, but we had the second largest chapter right here in the Bronx, and we had a lot of Baraka, that's when the conflicts came, cause they wanted Harlem to be the second largest, but Harlem wasn't it. Charles Baron was the head of Harlem.

D- Yeah I know him from Brooklyn.

R- But the Bronx chapter was the biggest chapter even though it wasn't supposed to be. They wanted Harlem to be, but it didn't work out. We had some of Baraka's people there too. With Debo, and some of the other guys, because Baraka used to have a store on Third Ave in the Bronx, when they were nationalists. They used to have a bookstore on Third Ave and 163rd St.

D- Are there any more black bookstores left in the Bronx?

R- We used to have one on Dye Ave, but it closed. "Briscoe Brown Books".

S- It was a classy bookstore. Its just that it was by the train station, and when people came home they would just pass by, and then a lot of people went to the Barnes and Noble that they built in Co-Op City that they just built. That's when she really started losing business.

D- And this was in the Northern Bronx?

S- Yeah, Dye Ave. That's as far as you can go on the train.

R- That's as far as you can go, cause the next block you'd be in Mt. Vernon. There is no other stops, from there you'd have to take the bus. She had a nice little store called "Briscoe Brown Books", but it went out of business because it was the one and only black bookstore except for a brief period of time in the late 60's early 70's when Baraka's people had a little store it was like a half bookstore have grocery. It used to be on Third Ave. You know Amri Baraka? A lot of his people were in our chapter, in fact they were the strongest cadre in the chapter of the cadre.

D- You see in Brooklyn you had that organization called the "East". Were there any Afro-centric schools in the Bronx?

R- They had black schools, but I wouldn't say Afro-centric.

D- They were more associated with the churches?

R- There was one my son went to, and Wendell Foster had one, it wasn't really his school but it was in his church with an Afro-centric sister running it. But it was a private school, and it was called Yelverton Academy. We had a couple of black private schools in the Bronx.

D- Sara do you have any other reflections?

S- No, except for when I was growing up, but you aren't talking about New Rochelle that much.

D- Only if its relevant (*laughter*).

R- The Nationalists community in the Bronx, cause I know Kebo(sp) taught Swahili in the YMCA on Southern Blvd on Saturdays. A lot of nationalists were into it before the East was.

D- So this was like 63-64'?

R- Yeah before the East was. When ...was Les Campbell and Kebo was Kebo Goyakwanza(sp). Hakeem was Hakeem and the drummers in 1964 while they was Les Campbell in Brooklyn. What happened was we didn't sustain like they did in Brooklyn, a lot of those guys fizzled out and last I heard Hakeem was living in Brooklyn. And Kebo, I don't know where he is, but they were nationalist brothers from way back. They wore Dashikis, they wore Afros, they wore Kufis, this is like before I saw it anywhere else except maybe Harlem. Brooklyn I didn't see it, cause my mother lived in Brooklyn and I was in Brooklyn all the time, and I saw in Bronx and in Harlem.

D- I saw it in Harlem in 63-64' with Charles Kenyatta and all this stuff.

R- Well these guys are like that. Don't forget, Alumba Braff, from the Kelly St area, he's Caribbean background, he's from that area. He grew up with Colin Powell, and so did her brothers.

D- I have a couple of great students, maybe they could do a senior thesis on the nationalist movement in the Bronx.

R- Alumbay, he went to Harlem. You see what happened was that the Bronx didn't sustain people. Some of what I think happened too, I'll never get over this. When I was working back in 1972 when they planned the national black political assembly, I was working as a

body guard for Roger Condending (sp), he writes in the paper in Florida. He was organizer for the Bronx Black National Assembly. Me and him went to the Bronx Urban League, NAACP, all these organizations to get people to come to Gary, IN. And a woman told him that it was the Puerto Ricans' Day, and not ours.

D- That's as early as 72'?

R- Yeah. That's what happened. I was involved in organizing, I didn't go to Gary, IN but I organized to go.

D- I did the research, and there's over a half- million people of African descent in the Bronx, that's a third of the population. That's a lot of people.

R- What happened is, and personally I think, don't take offense to this, but the Puerto Ricans out organized the blacks, and the white community helped them. Like I said before, I knew a lot of blacks who had good jobs, upwardly mobile, and tried to get apartments on Grand Concourse and the landlords would not rent to them. Then those same blacks would move mostly to Queens. Now, Queens has a whole black colony out there from the Bronx. My mother lives out there, my sister lives out there.

D- The woman I interviewed yesterday, Joan Tyson Fortune(sp), said the same thing. Because the Grand Concourse was closed, the west Bronx was closed, people moved to Queens and Brooklyn and you lost a lot of the talent.

R- When I moved to the west Bronx in the 70's it was already going down. When I was young before I could move on my own, I knew black who were firemen and teachers and were rejected to from the concourse. And they moved Queens and bought homes out there. Not so much Brooklyn but mostly Queens. Actually my mother moved to Brooklyn, so I'll say Brooklyn and Queens.

D- You could start to buy Brownstones in Brooklyn in the late 50's and 60's.

R- You know what happened to? Then what happened later on as the Jewish working class left the concourse and moved to Co-Op City, then the Puerto Ricans who were supers of those buildings brought their people in and they took over the buildings. Then poor blacks followed after them. Poor blacks from different places. Then the neighborhood with the poor blacks and Puerto Ricans led to the concourse getting torn down, but the landlords tore it down themselves. If they were to rent it out to the blacks who wanted to stay, they would have stabilized the community. That's why black and Latin unity, I read Manny Marabel's book and he said how hopeful it was and that we are all the same, we are not the same. Whether there can be unity, I'm not sure. Because of all of this water under the bridge, I'm not sure. One on one individually, that's different, but as a group, I'm not sure. What I think is that the Hispanics were used as the new house Negroes for white people against blacks. That's what I believe, cause I see it in Queens now. I work out in Riker's Island, all out there in Queens in the Northern part, Astoria, Corona, Jackson Heights, Elmhearst, you go to Manhattan, Frankie Lymon's old building, and its mostly Spanish now.

D- Paterson Projects is almost half-spanish now.

R- That neighborhood was Spanish before, and the projects were black, now their in the projects too. The say Spanish is the fastest growing minority. See I believe that white people who have power see the black masses as a threat to the stability of the Capitalist system. They will use other groups to hold us back. The other groups don't realize they are being used, but they allow themselves to be used. If you noticed, the Civil Rights Bill got passed, then the Voting Rights Bill got passed, then what got passed next, Immigration. I think it was done on purpose. The new technology takes other workers, but the old basic blue collar jobs you now have people that will work cheaper, that won't cuss the boss out, that will go along with the program so that's what they will take.

D- Although their children might not go along with the program, at least temporarily. There's a great book by the way about this by Roberto Suro called *Strangers Among Us: Latino Lies in a Changing United States* where he points out that they brought in Mexican workers to replace blacks but their children are becoming gangbangers and hip-hopers and won't work those jobs.

R- Know what happens then? You get a new group, and there's no end.

D- Until a certain point you have an alienated underclass that the society becomes that you need to send them to Iraq.

R- The Bronx is a precursor. What happened in the Bronx in the 60's and 70's is a precursor to what is happening now to the whole United States. The Bronx is a prototype of the Capitalist plan. I think that's what happened. What other people are feeling now, I felt like thirty years ago. And I'm still feeling it, and it don't feel good. And it hurts me.